

# Archives and Special Collections Strategic Plan – 2013-2018

The Archives and Special Collections strategic plan for 2013-2018 laid out goals and objectives that focused on making our resources more discoverable and accessible online, increasing usage of our unique materials, and ensuring that new acquisitions and accessions fulfill the college's curricular and administrative needs. Outcomes are described below after each individual objective, and a general conclusion follows at the end.

## Introduction

The Archives and Special Collections Department (A&SC) operates under one guiding principle – the unique resources under our care are meant to be accessed, used, handled, researched, and shared. We see ourselves as an active learning laboratory, where the interaction between patron and materials is critical to the processes of discovery, analysis, and knowledge creation. We seek to facilitate those processes through a user-centered approach to service and access.

As our aim is to support and promote the interaction between our patrons and our materials, we measure our success based on how well we can facilitate that interaction. In order to achieve success, we rely heavily upon collaboration with and assistance from our colleagues throughout the college. We rely on our fellow librarians, who are similarly charged with managing informational resources and educating others about their value and complexity. We rely on colleagues who manage hardware, software, and their own technical expertise, since the preservation of information today is almost entirely an electronic enterprise. We rely on individuals in campus offices to be mindful of their own activities, and how evidence of those activities needs to be consciously preserved for future use. And we rely on faculty, students, and other researchers to make discoveries within our resources, and to share these new ideas and new knowledge with the wider community.

This strategic plan has been drafted in order to articulate the principal responsibilities and aspirations for A&SC as reflected in our mission and through our strong commitment to access and service.

## Goal 1: Enhance and expand online presence.

A&SC launched a new website in the fall of 2012. The new site provides a place for much of the content from the older "Chronicles" website, and is extensible in its architecture to allow for new content to be created and shared in various ways. The new site, for the first time with any A&SC website, also provides places for both collection-level finding aids and item-level descriptions of resources.

Besides the departmental website, resources of A&SC are shared via multiple project-based college websites, including "Women's Experiences at Dickinson College," "Slavery & Abolition in the US," the "James Buchanan Resource Center," "Their Own Words," "Three Mile Island Emergency," and the "Chronicles." In addition, resources are shared via Flickr, an external image-sharing service that helps to make our resources more discoverable and accessible to wider audiences.

By enhancing and expanding our online presence, we seek to improve the visibility and accessibility of our unique resources.

- Objective 1: Complete the transfer of appropriate content from the “Chronicles” site to the new A&SC website. **All encyclopedia entries (~600), reading room items (~30), and compiled lists (7) were migrated, as well as select items from the timelines. Other content with more complex HTML pages and structures (e.g. Undergraduate Projects and Special Projects) will remain as is as a digital “archive” of early efforts to share the college’s history online.**
- Objective 2: Add content regarding the history of the college to the new website. **Beyond the content migrated from the old Chronicles website, we have added roughly 4000 timeline entries and an additional 50 encyclopedia entries.**
- Objective 3: Digitize and upload photographic images of college people, places, and events. **We have added roughly 8500 photographs to date.**
- Objective 4: Complete process for describing content of digitized *Dickinsonian*. **All *Dickinsonian* issues from 1872 thru 2016 (3283 issues) have been uploaded, tagged, and summarized.**
- Objective 5: Explore the possibility of digitizing other college publications for web delivery. **All *Microcosms* dating back to 1890 (126 volumes) have been uploaded. All alumni magazine issues have been digitized, and issues from 1923 to 1980 (~240 issues) have been uploaded and summarized, to date. Numerous additional titles have been digitized and are currently being processed for upload, including college catalogs, *Little Devil*, *Mermaid’s Tale*, *Daily Senator*, *Logbook*, *Boyd Lee Spahr Lectures*, student literary magazines, commencement and baccalaureate programs, and alumni directories.**
- Objective 6: Digitize and upload select audio and visual materials reflecting the history of the college. **While hundreds of analog audio and video tapes and films have been digitized, only a handful of items have been processed and shared (mostly short clips on the library’s public screen) due to a shortage of available student labor with appropriate expertise. Some of the digitized material has also been used by the college videographer for college productions.**
- Objective 7: Explore the creation of subject-oriented resource guides to A&SC holdings. **Students and interns have created guides to holdings regarding the Civil War, Russian language materials, and study abroad materials. A new resource guide for the Norris Collection is nearing completion.**
- Objective 8: Explore the use of other external services to share unique resources. **Use of Flickr as a tool to share image content has continued, and views of our Flickr content remain strong. Some student-produced literary magazines from earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were shared via *Dickinson Scholar*, but that effort is currently on hold due to limited staffing and higher priority materials. In order to improve efficiencies and cut costs, we migrated away from the CONTENTdm system, relocating digitized books and pamphlets to the Internet Archive and digitized manuscript content to the Archives website. We began using FlipSnack as a low-cost display program for easy page turning of content, and this tool is embedded on our website as a way to share yearbooks, newspapers, magazines, diaries, and similar multi-page content.**

## **Goal 2: Make resources more searchable and discoverable.**

A&SC has, in past years, shared information about its holdings only after a collection is fully processed, with a reasonably detailed and descriptive finding aid being uploaded to the library website as a PDF document. This approach ensures that contextual information about the collection is available at the point of discovery in order to make the materials more understandable to potential patrons.

As the volume of material being generated and added to the collections greatly exceeds the ability to fully process those materials, a more minimal initial approach to processing is warranted. These minimal

approaches may take many different forms and be customized depending on the material. The result is that we can make basic information about all of our resources available on the web, rather than having detailed information about only some of our resources. More detailed processing of select materials can subsequently be considered based on past usage, expressed interest, and available resources.

By improving the amount of basic descriptive information available online, as well as improving the usability of our website, we seek to increase the usage of our resources by patrons of all types.

- Objective 1: Upload all finding aids for fully processed archival and manuscript collections, as well as for collections that are only inventoried or partially processed. **This effort is ongoing, with more than 225 finding aids available to date.**
- Objective 2: Upload images and descriptions of select resources to the document content type. **This effort is ongoing, with more than 1450 digitized letters, essays, broadsides, journals, scrapbooks, oral histories, and other documents available to date.**
- Objective 3: Create inventories for all archival and manuscript collections not yet processed, and consider more detailed processing only if and when focused interest is evident, or appropriate resources become available. **This effort is ongoing, as new donations are received on a regular basis. Roughly 20 selected collections have been processed in more detail by student employees and interns.**
- Objective 4: Explore modules, plug-ins, and other enhancements to the current website to improve the searchability of resources within the site. **Minor modules and plug-ins have been added as appropriate, but the change of greatest impact is the addition of the Apache SOLR search tool, which allows full-text searching of PDF files loaded on the site. This tool makes it possible for patrons to search the full text of hundreds of thousands of pages of content, like the student newspaper, yearbooks, alumni magazines, and transcribed letters and diaries.**
- Objective 5: Examine the viability of implementing a software tool designed specifically to manage archival and manuscript holdings. **While we were carefully watching the development of the new ArchiveSpace software, this tool has fallen far short of expectations for what it can do as a management tool for archives, with a relatively high cost as well.**

### **Goal 3: Increase onsite usage of resources by patrons.**

The changing of the curriculum through the years, the increased availability and greater convenience of informational resources online, and the specialization in areas of faculty research has the result that the unique holdings of A&SC are often overlooked or else viewed as less relevant by Dickinson students and faculty members. While usage by researchers external to the college community has generally increased merely through the somewhat passive act of sharing more resources via the web, usage by internal audiences increases only through constant, proactive efforts to raise visibility of and interest in these unique materials.

As a means of enhancing both the curriculum and the co-curriculum, we encourage exploration and seek to increase usage of our resources by the college community.

- Objective 1: Develop targeted approaches for making faculty members aware of available resources that may be relevant to their teaching and research. **A few ideas to raise awareness were discussed with select faculty and administrators, but in the meantime, usage of**

resources for class instruction increased as a result of both new archives initiatives and new faculty hires. The result is that targeted approaches no longer seem necessary

- Objective 2: Explore opportunities to enhance the co-curriculum by working closely with student organizations and their representatives. **As with the faculty, usage has increased without any direct outreach efforts. Several student organizations have sought to explore their own histories through their collections in the Archives, and there have been collaborations with alumni as well.**
- Objective 3: Experiment with new programming initiatives to raise awareness about A&SC throughout the Dickinson community. **Several ideas for programming were proposed, but we did not have the available staff time to pursue these ideas. Some efforts that have been implemented include the throwback social media posters outside the Archives (which seem particularly popular) as well as the physical exhibits throughout the library curated by student employees and interns.**

#### **Goal 4: Shape the collections to more closely reflect the needs of faculty and students.**

The holdings of A&SC are, to at least some extent, fluid and organic. New subjects being taught and new methods of teaching may require the addition of unique resources in support of these curricular changes. In addition, faculty members and undergraduates may generate new resources in the course of their researches that are appropriate for deposit among the special collections. At the same time, materials acquired in the past will not necessarily be of use to students and faculty members today.

In order to fulfill our mission in support of the educational program of the college, we seek to improve our special collections holdings to meet the ever-evolving teaching and learning landscape.

- Objective 1: Acquire new material to complement and enhance existing holdings, allowing for increased depth in areas already identified as collecting strengths. **Collecting more physical material related to the Carlisle Indian School has been a priority, as use of the collections for college courses has increased with the development of the online resource center.**
- Objective 2: Work with faculty members to identify areas of collecting interest that would support the curriculum and enhance the teaching process. **The partnership with the LGBT Center of Central PA to support their history project has resulted in a treasure trove of special materials of local interest, which are used for college courses and for numerous outreach activities. Using funds from the Goodyear Endowment, we have also acquired rare books and other special materials at faculty request to support teaching on John Milton, the Harlem Renaissance, Spanish exploration of the Americas, fascist Italy, Homer's *Iliad*, Melville's *Moby Dick*, and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.**
- Objective 3: Review and update the collection development policy to ensure that it reflects new areas of interest as well as new procedures for acquisition and deaccession. **The collection development policy was updated and approved in February 2018.**
- Objective 4: Continue to identify materials deemed inappropriate for A&SC and remove them from the collection. **Deaccessioning duplicate books and pamphlets, as well as personal papers and photographs with no relation to Dickinson or its curriculum, has continued, with appropriate faculty being consulted in cases of more substantial collections (e.g. John Drinkwater and Carl Sandburg). We also worked with representatives for three local churches to have their church archives transferred to the care and management of the Cumberland County Historical Society.**

## **Goal 5: Ensure the proper preservation and dissemination of the burgeoning college archival record.**

The activities of A&SC are not limited to managing and handling records of the distant and recent past. They also include attention to and management of the documentary record that is currently being created and will be created in the future. Organizational structures grow and evolve, institutional activities and responsibilities change, technologies are developed and replaced, and the sheer volume of informational resources being generated continues to increase, all at a relatively rapid pace when compared with the past.

To support the administration of the institution, we seek to secure an appropriately comprehensive and balanced record of the college and to guarantee the long-term viability of these informational resources.

- Objective 1: Explore new technologies and new techniques for acquiring and maintaining the college archival record. **We continue to monitor software development in the field to support archival functions and general content management, but we have not identified a tool that meets our needs sustainably, given our resource constraints.**
- Objective 2: Communicate with offices and departments about the changing needs and expectations regarding their record keeping practices. **On a case by case basis, the College Archivist has provided guidance to various campus offices and individual staff members about what records should be maintained, and in what form, and assisted with having appropriate material transferred to the archives.**
- Objective 3: Continue to articulate the importance of a centralized, institution-wide approach to records management. **Due to other emerging priorities, this particular objective was not pursued, with the exception of the case by case interactions mentioned above. More broadly, this effort has been taken up in recent years by the Infrastructure Systems Department of LIS, and a campus-wide records management policy is in development. While this effort is being driven primarily by considerations for properly maintaining the electronic records of the college, the principles and concepts apply regardless of the format of the content.**

## **Conclusion**

**We are very pleased by our accomplishments over the past five years, and we wish to especially acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the Library Digital Projects Manager and the various Friends of the Library Interns, positions which are supported only through endowed library funds. Without their efforts, much of the progress described above would not have been possible, particularly with regard to the ongoing development and maintenance of our digital presence. In addition, the library invested in one high-end professional scanner and an additional more moderate model to facilitate the digitization of hundreds of thousands of pages of material.**

**It is also worth noting that shortly after this strategic plan was adopted, we entered into a partnership agreement with the LGBT Center of Central PA to preserve and maintain materials related to their ongoing history project, and we also began work on the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center digital humanities project. These two major initiatives were not even under consideration at the time the strategic plan was developed, and yet they have been a big part of our work these past five years. The projects have since grown at a pace unanticipated when they were started, and they account for a significant amount of staff time and other resources. The success of these two efforts is reflected in the heavy use of these digital and analog materials by both the Dickinson community and the larger**

research community and general public. These two major activities continue to occupy much of our attention, and we anticipate continued significant growth, both in materials and usage.

These projects have also gotten notable recognition. The LGBT Center of Central PA History Project received the J. Franklin Jameson Advocacy Award from the Society of American Archivists in 2014, and the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center project received a \$76,000 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 2017 to support outreach efforts; the grant funded a summer teachers' institute held here in Carlisle as well as travel to nearly two dozen native communities across the country for public engagement activities at schools, colleges, and community centers. Finally, both projects speak directly to the college's new strategic priorities related to diversity and inclusion, and we plan to continue our work on these projects in support of the active teaching and learning going on at Dickinson related to these topics.

As we look toward our next strategic plan, we plan to refocus our efforts on some of the more foundational aspects of our work. Over the past five years, the volume of new accessions and donations has exceeded our ability to keep up with essential processing activities, which are necessary for maintaining intellectual control over our collections and for ensuring that our finite spaces are used efficiently. In order to effectively deliver special materials online, careful processing and cataloging needs to be done so that the descriptive metadata applied to the online resources can support more effective discovery and access. Careful processing also ensures that we can respond to the teaching and research needs of faculty, students, administrators, and other patrons most effectively. As our online footprint continues to grow, so too does the volume of onsite and virtual use of our collections. In order to maintain our high level of patron service while meeting the increased needs of our users, we will continue to explore ways to balance the expectations for all-digital content described in detail with the realities of limited human and financial resources.